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ABSTRACT

A survey investigated how language management strategies used by bilingual families could create family communication problems. The study was inspired by experience with bilingual families in which rigid adherence to a language policy appeared to impede communication. Respondents were 83 members of a special interest group on bilingualism within a Japanese language teacher's association. The survey explored respondent familiarity with the "one person-one language" strategy in which each parent speaks his own language at home, and home/community language strategy in which parents speak the minority language in the home and children learn the majority language through interactions outside the family. Results suggest that families applying these two language management strategies often face a wide range of problems, especially after the children reach school age and when families have more than one child. An alternative approach is recommended, in which parents make a conscious effort to help their children bridge the gap between two divergent languages and cultures through systematic modeling and promotion of the development of both languages. Specific techniques for achieving this are offered, including modeling, recasting/expansion/filling in the blanks, debriefing, and temporary intensive training. (Contains 15 references.) (MSE)

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The Bilingual Parent as Model for the Bilingual Child

Mary Goebel Noguchi

The literature on childhood bilingualism is heavily weighted in favor of rigid patterns of language use. Since 1913 when Ronjat introduced the one person-one language system, the field has been dominated by linguists who have studied their own children's acquisition of two languages (Romaine, 1989). As a result, the focus has been on linguistic development, particularly on the separation of the two language systems, with most studies finishing well before the subjects enter school. Little attention has been given to the emotional considerations involved in maintaining strategies such as the one person-one language approach or the home/community language system after children begin formal schooling, nor has much research been devoted to subjects learning two languages with roots in very different cultures.

In the course of research into factors that promote bilingualism in families with one or more native English-speaking parents living in Japan, I discovered a number of cases in which rigid adherence to one of these language-use strategies appeared to have led to emotional strain or communication problems in the family, particularly once the children reached school age. I therefore included questions about the benefits and problems involved in these strategies in a pilot survey for a study on factors that promote English-Japanese bilingualism in Japan.

In this paper, I will analyze the trends revealed by these survey questions, examine the rationale for consistency in long-term maintenance of these strategies, and propose a more flexible model for bilingual childrearing based on parental use of knowledge of both of their children's languages to promote parent-child communication and help their children deal with different social as well as linguistic systems. In presenting this approach, in which parents serve as models of bilingualism and biculturalism for their children, I will describe a number of

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techniques designed to meet the emotional and linguistic needs of bilingual children and thus promote their psychological well-being.

Problems With Rigid Consistency

Following the lead of linguists in the field, handbooks for parents trying to raise their children with two languages (cf. de Jong, 1986, Harding & Riley, 1986, and Arnberg, 1987) tend to stress variations of two basic language management strategies: the one person-one language approach, in which the parents have different languages and each speaks his or her own language to the children, and the home/community language system, in which the parents speak the minority language in the home and the children learn the majority language through interactions with people outside of the family. While these handbooks present a number of variations of these patterns, neither de Jong nor Harding and Riley really discuss the possibility of alternate use of both languages by parents, even though some mixing of languages "is probably the most frequently occurring context for 'natural' bilingual acquisition in multilingual settings" (Romaine, 1989, p. 166).

Far from dealing with the possibility of flexibility in language use, these handbooks strongly caution against it. Throughout their chapters on language strategies, they repeat the need for "consistency". Arnberg stresses that "it is extremely important that the parent speaking the minority language be absolutely consistent in the use of this language to the child" (p. 87). She goes on to define "the ideal situation" to be "one in which parents consistently follow the one-person/one-language strategy and where the minority language is used as the family language" (p. 95).

Yet Arnberg admits that the need for consistency has not been experimentally proven to be important (p. 94) and that many parents and some researchers question whether it is absolutely necessary (p. 88). In fact, one of the strongest experimental cases for consistency to date is open to doubt. In her study of six Australian families who used the one person-one language approach to teach their children German as well as English, Dopke (1992) concludes that the bilingual language development of these children correlated with the parents' consistency in language use, yet this conclusion seems questionable in light of her data. To make her case for consistency, Dopke claims that the parents of a child who showed open refusal to use the minority language (German) were less consistent in their language use than the parents of the two children who actively spoke German in her

study. Yet her data shows that the mean consistency of the language choice of the parents of the boy who refused to speak German was a full 96.1% – slightly higher than for the parents of the child who used German the most, and more than 10% higher than the parents of one of the children whose attitude toward German was neutral. Why, then, did Dopke label the parents' language use inconsistent in the former case? She explains that it is because they used German to each other 40% of the time, while all the other couples in the study used English to communicate with each other. It stands to reason that if anything, the use of German – the minority language – by these parents should have enforced the child's development of that language rather than hindered it. The boy's refusal to use German must therefore have had causes other than parental inconsistency.

While experimental proof of the need for consistency in maintaining a language management policy remains elusive, one does not have to search far to find evidence of problems involved in following such strategies. The above-mentioned handbooks themselves hint at the difficulties. Arnberg mentions a Polish immigrant mother in Sweden who stressed how "exhausting" and "unnatural" the one person-one language approach was for her (p. 5). She also recounts the story of a father who religiously followed the family policy of using his non-native language in the home, but regretted that he – a musician to whom music was quite important – had never been able to sing to his child in his own language. Arnberg actually goes so far as to suggest that in such cases an exception should be made and the reasons explained to the child (p. 91). De Jong (1986) also makes it clear that one of the parents in the one person-one language arrangement often feels left out of the conversation. She suggests that the home/community language strategy causes less intra-family stress, but doesn't address the problem of how the children will learn the outside language (pp. 37-38). With either system, she points out that children tend to rebel against rigid rules or counteract them in ingenious ways (p. 42).

The Bilingual Family Newsletter has also aired a long-running debate about the one person-one language strategy. Although the editorial board stresses the need for consistency, especially if the parent speaking the minority language is the child's only contact with that language, letters have continued to come in on problems readers have had in putting it into practice. In one of them, Rosemary Kneipp (1995) questions the "ultimate social appropriateness of speaking a language to a child in front of other people who do not understand that language and its repercussions on the child's development as a social being" (p. 5). She also asks whether it is "psychologically sound to exclude a child's parent from the

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relationship by speaking a language the other does not understand in front of him" (p. 5). Alathea Anderssohn (1995) echoes Kneipp's concerns about etiquette, while also bringing up two more problems with this strategy. She mentions that in helping her children with homework, she feels it essential to use the language of the school. Also, she stresses that she feels it is more important to encourage her daughters "to express the ideas which are important to them, than insist on the use of English at all times" (p. 4).

Survey on Language Strategies

In the course of my own contact with a wide range of parents who have tried to raise their children bilingually in Japan, I also discovered a number of cases that made me doubt the advisability of absolute consistency in applying language strategies. In four families in which the home/community language system was used, children either couldn't explain what had happened to them at school in the home language or did not tell their parents about their life at school. In one family in which the one person-one language strategy was used, on the other hand, the parent who spoke the minority language pretended not to understand the majority language even though his phone conversations in Japanese made it obvious that he was fluent in the language. Such insistence on maintaining the family language policy at all costs may well have undermined his trustworthiness in his children's eyes.

To determine whether such problems with language management strategies were widespread, I decided to include questions about these strategies in a pilot survey I was planning to conduct for a study on factors that promote English-Japanese bilingualism in Japan. In a questionnaire sent out to 200 members of the National Special Interest Group (N-SIG) on Bilingualism of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) in July 1995, questions were asked about the respondent's familiarity with the one person-one language and home/community language strategies, whether they had used these strategies, and if they had, how consistently they had applied them, what benefits they found in them and what problems they had encountered. Other questions determined the children's age and ability in both Japanese and English, as well as the parent's ability and the proportion of use for each language between the different members of the family. Details of the complete survey and its results will be reported at a later date, but those pertaining directly to the advantages and disadvantages of these two language

management strategies will be discussed here.

Of the 200 questionnaires sent out, I received 83 responses, while one questionnaire was returned because the addressee had moved out of the country. A number of the responses were deemed unusable because the answers were incomplete and unclear, the respondent had no children or children who were too old or young for the purposes of the survey, or because the questionnaires had been filled out by people outside the target group (N-SIG members). 69 responses, however, were determined to be usable. These respondents were divided into 8 groups according to characteristics of their families: 1) both parents were native speakers of English, 2) the mother was a native speaker of English and the father was Japanese, 3) the mother was Japanese and the father was a native speaker of English, 4) the mother was a native speaker of a language other than English or Japanese and the father was a native speaker of English, 5) the mother was Japanese-English bicultural and the father was a native speaker of English, 6) the mother was a native speaker of English and a single parent, 7) the mother was Japanese and the father was a native speaker of a language other than English or Japanese, and 8) the mother was a native speaker of English and the father was a native speaker of a language other than English or Japanese. Table 1 below shows the number of respondents and the number of children in each of these family types.

Table 1: Respondents According to Family Type

Type Number	Number of Respondents	Number of Children
1	8	13
2	16	28
3	40	65
4	1	3
5	1	1
6	1	1
7	1	1
8	1	1
Total	69	113

62 of the respondents (90%) were familiar with the one person-one language strategy, while 59 (86%) knew of the home/community language strategy. This high rate of knowledge was expected, since the respondents were members of a group

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devoted to the study of bilingualism and recipients of a bimonthly newsletter that regularly uses these terms. Because the members of this group are on average more aware of bilingualism and strategies to promote it, it was thought that they could provide useful feedback on language management strategies designed to promote bilingualism.

The rate of conscious usage of these strategies was lower than member awareness of them (see Table 2), and in some cases involved self-declared consistency levels as low as 2 on a scale of 10 (2 indicating "rarely follow", 5 "follow about half of the time" and 10 "follow without fail"). In two cases, respondents gave up on the strategy entirely (one for each strategy), in two cases, the respondents switched from one strategy to another, and in three cases the respondents modified the strategy in some way. In three other cases, respondents rated the consistency of their Japanese spouse as lower than themselves. Only ten respondents gave their consistency the maximum 10 rating. From these statistics alone it can be surmised that the target group experienced problems in consistently maintaining these strategies.

Table 2: Knowledge and Use of Language Management Strategies

Strategy	Family Type Number	Number (& %) of Respondents Familiar With	Number (& %) of Respondents Who Used	Total Number of Respondents
One	1	4 (50%)	0 (0%)	8
Person-	2	16 (100%)	13 (81%)	16
One	3	37 (92.5%)	33 (82.5%)	40
Language	4	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1
	5	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1
	6	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1
	7	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1
	8	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1
Home/	1	5 (62.5%)	5 (62.5%)	8
Community	2	14 (87.5%)	5 (31%)	16
Language	3	35 (87.5%)	11 (27.5%)	40
	4	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1
	5	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1
	6	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1
	7	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1
	8	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1

Note: Some families used both strategies at the same time or switched strategies, so there is some overlap

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A number of respondents mentioned other strategies that they employed. These included switchback (mixing languages), English during special events including reading books, English use on "home" visits during vacations (also referred to as "one language-one environment" by one of the respondents), modified one person-one language in which the home language alternates on alternating days, maximizing family involvement in both language communities, and the native English speaking parent using only English while the Japanese parent uses both.

The respondents who did employ the orthodox strategies listed a number of benefits. For the one person-one language strategy, among the stated advantages were that it is natural, comfortable or common sense (10 respondents), is effective and successful (5), is easy for the child to understand (5), improves listening comprehension (5), ensures use of the minority language (4), is easy (4), and that it allows both parents to express themselves fully (3). For the home/community language approach, among the stated advantages were that it ensures the extra minority language input needed to support bilingualism (13), it is the natural/only option for English-speaking immigrant families (4), that it allows Japanese to be picked up from ready sources such as school, day care and friends (3) and that it ensures family cohesion (1).

Nonetheless, many disadvantages of these systems were mentioned. Space limitations do not permit a full list, but the following is a summary of major trends. The one person-one language approach was seen to be impolite or alienating when used in the presence of family members, friends or others who do not speak the language (26 respondents noted such problems). Six respondents mentioned particular trouble in maintaining this approach in the presence of Japanese in-laws – a common situation in Japan, where extended families still often live together. Four respondents also felt the strategy seemed very unnatural, and four mentioned trouble in getting their spouse's support for this system. Four mothers mentioned difficulty in insisting on the use of English when children were tired, in a bad mood, or talking about school. Another four respondents noted that as children got older and their day was increasingly conducted in Japanese, it was difficult to insist on communicating only in English. Four parents also mentioned that they felt communication with their children should take priority over language development. In three cases where children were put into day care from a young age and three where the native speaker of English was the father, the low level of English input was cited as a problem with this system. Similarly, four respondents mentioned the need to fill in gaps in English vocabulary or the strain of trying to make children

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understand English. Four respondents also mentioned that this system does not allow the native speaker of English to improve his/her Japanese ability or to model bilinguality for their children.

The home/community language strategy was also seen to have many problems. As in the case of the one person-one language approach, six respondents thought it to be impolite to maintain this system in the presence of monolinguals. A large number of problems centered around the fact that for most members of an intercultural family in this country, Japanese was easier to use, so the use of English was difficult or put a strain on the Japanese partner (6 respondents), the children would get frustrated if they could not express themselves in English (3), the children sometimes would just give up (2) and the family would quit using English when the native English speaking parent was not present (2). Two respondents stated that they "couldn't do it" and another two found it very unnatural. Another disliked presenting the image of a linguistic island of English in a monolingual country like Japan. The fact that school and other subjects naturally tended to be discussed in Japanese was noted by six respondents, while another noted that she could not help her child with homework from Japanese school if she insisted on using only English. Two respondents mentioned that this system hinders improvement in Japanese by native speakers of English, and three noted that their children wanted their native English speaking parents to improve their Japanese language skills. One respondent mentioned the possibility of anomie - anxiety borne of a bilingual's inability to resolve conflicting demands from his two cultures. Finally, one parent in each group noted a fear that children might be bullied for being different if they used English in front of their monolingual Japanese peers, since this society emphasizes conformity so strongly.

If the number of respondents who reported problems with these systems is compared to the total number who employed them, we see that a large portion encountered difficulties. Of the 53 respondents who had used the one person-one language strategy, 42 (79%) listed problems while only 11 (21%) did not. (Those who wrote "no real problems but ..." and then mentioned what they obviously considered a minor annoyance were counted among those who did not note problems with the strategy). Similarly, of the 25 respondents who said they had employed the home/community language strategy, 18 (72%) listed problems, while only 7 (28%) did not or said there were no major problems.

In looking at the families of respondents who reported problems with these two strategies, a strong trend was seen in both groups. Of the 42 respondents who

noted problems with the one person-one language strategy, in only three cases (7%) were all of the children young enough to still be at home, in only six (14%) were all of the children in day care, while in 33 cases - a full 79% - some or all of the children were already in school. Similarly, of the 18 respondents who noted problems with the home/community language system, only three (17%) had all children who were not yet in school, another three (17%) had all children who were in day care, while the remaining 12 (67%) had some or all children who were already school age. Thus, respondents with school-age children predominated.

In contrast, of the 11 respondents who had employed the one person-one language strategy but reported no major problems and the 7 who had employed the home/community language system and reported no major problems, in many cases (11 out of 18) all of the children were 7 years of age or younger and thus had not started school or only just started school. Moreover, in 11 out of 18 of these cases, the children were only children. This may have made it easier for parents to insist on carrying out the strategy, since there is more parent-to-child contact and parents outnumber children. In one other case, the two children were older (16 and 11 years), but they were both in an English-medium school and came from a family that employed the home/community language strategy, so presumably there was no tension between the language used at school and that used at home.

Thus, the survey results suggest that families who apply these two language management strategies often face a wide range of problems, especially after the children reach school age and when families have more than one child.

The Bilingual Parent as Role Model

Given the dearth of experimental evidence for the need to rigidly maintain one of the dominant language strategies as well as indications from the survey that suggest many problems in application of these strategies, especially after children reach school age, I would like to propose a new model for parents who are trying to raise their children bilingually. This model is designed to help parents use their knowledge of both languages and cultures to promote parent-child communication and help their children deal with both social and linguistic systems. I believe that this model will be particularly helpful to parents of school-age bilingual children, especially when they are dealing with highly divergent languages and cultures, as is the case with Japanese-English bilinguals.

Before I begin my discussion of how bilingual parents can act as models for

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their children, however, I would like to clarify two points. First, when I speak of a "bilingual" parent, I am using this term in a very broad sense, one that conforms to Mackey's definition of bilingualism as the alternate use of two languages (Romaine, 1989, p. 11). This would include, for example, native speakers of English who cannot speak much Japanese but can understand a fair amount of the spoken language.

Second, I want to make it clear that I am not advocating random mixing of two languages or long-term predominant use of the majority language by native speakers of the minority language. Research indicates that the linguistic pattern in the home should emphasize the minority language. Among other studies, Yamamoto's 1991 survey indicated that in families founded on an international marriage between a Japanese and a native speaker of English living in Japan, it is necessary for the native speaker of English to talk to the children in English all of the time or almost all of the time if the child is to become bilingual, although this alone is not sufficient to ensure that the children will answer the native English speaking parent in English (p. 150). In my own research on the success of parents teaching their Japanese-English bilingual children to read English at home in Japan, I found that the predominant use of English by both parents has a higher correlation to high English reading achievement levels than more balanced communication schemes such as the one person-one language approach (Noguchi, in press). Many of the comments written by the respondents in my survey, too, stressed the need for plenty of input of the minority language. Among the techniques mentioned for increasing such input were: English videos and tapes of TV programs (mentioned by 11 respondents), visits to the native English speaker's home country during vacations (10), reading English books (9), teaching reading in the second language (8), play groups and other means of increasing contact with friends who are native speakers of English or bilingual (4), the use of English computer softeware (2), inviting native speakers of English to the home as guests (1), and urging Japanese family members, especially spouses, to use as much English as possible in the family (1). Thus, maximum contact with the minority language is seen as essential in promoting bilingualism.

What I am recommending, however, is a conscious effort on the part of parents to help their children bridge the gap between two divergent languages and cultures through systematic modeling of, and promotion of the development of, both of their languages. Arnberg (1987) actually gives a strong argument for this type of approach in her chapter on immigrant parents. She notes:

> Some studies have shown that minority group adolescents may experience difficulties in coping with their duel identities, many feeling forced to choose between one group or the other. It is highly important that the child be helped in developing a positive bilingual and bicultural identity during the pre-school years so that such identity problems during the teenage years can be avoided. (p. 16)

She contrasts the problems of such immigrants with a group of Canadian teenage children from mixed English/French-speaking families, who showed a healthy adjustment when compared with a monolingual control group. She suggests that among other factors, one reason for their positive self identities was that "the parents themselves were bilingual and bicultural and were highly supportive of these traits in their children" (p. 17). De Jong (1986), too, recommends that rather than being too strict in setting up a family language policy, parents should "be flexible, for only then can children learn what it means to be bilingual: to be able to switch languages according to needs and circumstances" (p. 41).

This new model, then, is a flexible approach to parental language use that, while emphasizing development of the minority language, incorporates a number of techniques in which they can use their knowledge of the majority language to help their children bridge the gap between their two languages and cultures. The techniques used in this model are described below.

I. Modeling

In the first technique in this approach, parents serve as models for their children in terms of language use and culture. Yamamoto (1991) found that while 35% of the parents in her study felt that their children had some problems fitting into Japanese society because they were viewed as "*gaijin*" (foreigners) or "bilingual" (and thus not "wholly Japanese" in the conventional sense), it was apparent that if the parents were on friendly terms with their Japanese neighbors and the native English speaking parent could speak Japanese, this greatly relieved the tension surrounding their presence in Japanese society (p. 161). Arnberg (1987) also states that "parents should make an attempt to learn the majority language as well as possible, not only for their own sakes but also for their children's" (pp. 15 - 16). In modeling bilinguality, parents would naturally switch languages in the presence of those who did not understand the language being used, and thus eliminate one of the big problems mentioned in the debate in *The Bilingual Family Newsletter* and cited by many respondents in my 1995 study.

Some parents may not wish to use their non native language because they want to avoid the embarrassment of making mistakes in front of their children. This is natural, but I believe that by letting the children see them dealing with two languages, parents can show that they understand the problems their children are faced with. They can share both the pleasures and the pains of dealing with two linguistic systems. Moreover, by persisting in their efforts, they show their children that they really believe it is all right to make mistakes and that it is important not to give up.

Parents can also display a positive attitude toward bilingualism by teaching children new vocabulary in both languages at the same time, rather than leaving open the possibility of the child knowing a word in one language but not the other.

It is also important for parents to act as bicultural models for their children - to be seen dealing with two cultures. They can do this by taking their children along when they go shopping or introducing them to colleagues at work. But probably more important than showing children how we parents make it in our world is letting them see us making it in theirs.

It is not hard to find reasons to avoid participating in school support or community activities. In addition to time constraints and language problems, Westerners in Japan often feel impatient with the regimentation or the seemingly inane nature of the activities. One American mother living in Japan confided that she was quite disgusted after a group of mothers at the nursery school her children attended spent an hour and a half discussing how they dry their children's clothes in the winter, when she simply relied on her clothes dryer.

However, she felt that she could not simply ignore her responsibility, so she continued to participate in the parents' activities. When it came time for her daughter to move on to elementary school, this American, as the mother who had had her child in the nursery school the longest, was asked to speak as the mothers' representative at the graduation ceremony. It took her hours of work to prepare her address in Japanese, but afterward she told me with pride that there had not been a dry eye in the house that day. Her daughter surely must have been impressed by her mother's willingness to serve in her second culture.

Another American parent mentioned in a talk about raising his son bilingually in Japan that in order to avoid constantly being called *gaijin* (foreigner) wherever he went in the neighborhood, he decided to actively participate in community activities. He was quite pleased when his efforts paid off and he became known to the local children as "Ken's father".

By serving as bilingual and bicultural models for their children in this way, parents can show their children how to cope with linguistic difficulties and cultural marginality, thus giving them greater self confidence in establishing their dual identity.

Ⅱ. Recasting, Expansion and Filling in the Blanks

Another area in home language use in which flexibility is recommended is in helping children over the gaps in their knowledge of one of their languages. The literature is not in agreement on this point. Some linguists, including Ronjat and Leopold, insist that strict adherence to the one person-one language principle precludes a parent's teaching a word in one language which the child asks for by giving its equivalent in the other language. Other researchers, such as Saunders and Fantani, freely gave translations and supplied words when they thought their children needed them (Romaine, 1989, p. 178).

However, if parents view themselves as models of bilingualism for their children, it is only natural for them to help their children over gaps in their linguistic knowledge. When young children are learning to speak, parents often recast the child's utterances: When a child says, "Broom falled down", his mother might respond, "Yes, the broom fell down, didn't it?" (Baron, 1990, pp. 38 - 39). She might then go on to expand the utterance by continuing, "It went bang" or "Let's pick it up". Bilingual parents can simply extend this kind of linguistic modeling beyond their children's infancy. When my daughter was describing her math homework, she stumbled over the vocabulary: "I could add the numbers, but the *hikizan* [subtraction] was a little hard." Rather than making a fuss about her code-mixing, I helped her continue the conversation in English by recasting her remark : "Oh, the subtraction gave you some trouble, eh?" Similarly, when I spot a case of interference, I simply recast the expression. For example, when my son held up a piece of play candy and made the statement "This don't get the teeth hurt" (a literal rendering of the Japanese expression *Kore wa ha wo itamanai*), I said, "Oh, I see. This one's not bad for your teeth."

This kind of facilitation is an important part of any child's linguistic development, but certainly, it is crucial in minimizing frustration in dealing with two languages - a negative factor reported by many parents in the survey, and one which led a number of children in the survey families to give up trying. Further support for this technique can be found in the results of a study by Dopke (1986).

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She found that when parents have different language backgrounds, children will prefer to learn the language of the parent who is more skillful in incorporating the child's perspective and needs into verbal interaction. Thus, parents who want their children to learn their language are well advised to make it as easy as possible for their children to speak it without embarrassment.

Dodson (1985) also presents a strong rationale for this kind of linguistic support. He argues that all bilinguals have a preferred and a second language at any given time for any given subject, and that bilinguals routinely confirm the meaning of communications in their second language by seeking preferred-language equivalents. Even when bilinguals have guessed the meaning of the second-language utterances, they normally will not rest until they have confirmed the meaning in their preferred language. Dodson goes on to stress the importance of bilingual medium-oriented activities that help bilinguals discover these equivalents, and notes the "frustration and anguish" caused by people who – often with the best of intentions – try to force bilinguals to refrain from reference to their preferred language in any given circumstance. This observation is bolstered by some of the problems noted by the respondents in my survey, especially the tendency to switch over to Japanese whenever the native English speaker is absent or the topic is Japanese specific.

Thus parents can prevent frustration and fulfill a very important function in the language acquisition process by helping their bilingual children fill in the gaps between their languages.

Ⅲ. Debriefing

In her chapter on bilingualism for 5 – 11 year olds, de Jong explains

> ...a particular feature of the bilingual development of children in this age group is the growing discrepancy between age development and language development. The language spoken at school will almost always become the language in which the children learn more complex notions, in which they are capable of reading more interesting works, and in which they can express themselves more accurately. As a result, they will also want to use this language at home to describe and ask questions about their expanding world. (p. 58)

Arnberg notes that just as adult immigrants find it more tiring to speak a second language than their mother tongue, children may also find it a strain to switch into another language after a long day at school. They may also lack the vocabulary in

the minority language to explain their experiences. Such problems were also brought up by many of the respondents in my survey. Thus, if parents insist on using the minority language, they may find that their children will stop talking to them about their life outside the home.

To encourage communication with my own school-age children, I have developed a technique I call debriefing. When my children come home, I always try to ask about their day. Often, they start out explaining in English, but when they come to new vocabulary or intense experiences, they seem unable to stop the flow of Japanese. I simply let them go. I am an American, but I speak Japanese and feel it is very important to know what has happened to my children. Even when I need to clarify what has happened, I usually do so in Japanese.

Then, when they've got everything out, I switch the conversation back into English with a routine utterance: "Why don't you take your bag upstairs and come down for a snack", for example. To make sure that the children eventually learn to express everything in English, I go over the story again later on. Sometimes I do this by asking clarification questions while they're having their afternoon snack; at other times, I bring up the matter when we're talking in English with their father in the evening. In either case, I make sure to offer new English vocabulary (with the equivalent in Japanese when necessary) so that they can explain most, if not all, of their experiences in both of their languages.

Ⅳ. Temporary Intensive Training

As mentioned earlier, research indicates that bilingual families need to devote the bulk of their efforts to the minority language if children are to remain active bilinguals. Nonetheless, bilingual children may encounter periods of difficulties with the majority language. Again, I have found cases that indicate flexibility is the wisest approach.

In the first instance, a bilingual sansei Japanese-Canadian and her Anglo-Canadian husband were using the home/community language strategy when their daughter entered a local kindergarten in Japan. As the daughter began learning more Japanese, she picked up a very rough manner of speaking from the little boys she played with most often. Her mother, believing that her daughter's masculine Japanese would later cause her trouble in a society that strongly insists on women speaking "like women", decided to talk to the girl in Japanese for a while so that she would have a good model of feminine speech patterns. After several

weeks, the girl followed her mother's lead and adopted the feminine forms of speech. The mother then resumed her policy of talking to her daughter only in English.

In the second case, a Japanese-English bilingual girl who was about to enter first grade in a Japanese school began resisting the English reading lessons her American mother was giving her. Instead, the child spent a great deal of time trying to read simple Japanese books in *hiragana*, the basic Japanese syllabary. Her mother, sensing that the girl was worried about her Japanese reading ability compared to her monolingual classmates, decided to ease up on the English reading lessons so that her daughter could concentrate on her Japanese. After the girl was comfortably settled in first grade, they went back to their original lesson schedule.

Since children's linguistic development often occurs in spurts, it is only natural for there to be crisis periods in the development of the language capabilities of bilingual children. Rather than allowing their children to flounder, parents would be wiser to give them intensive work on either one of their languages when the need arises.

Conclusion

While consistent language use on the part of parents may be helpful in the beginning stages of bilingual development because it helps young children distinguish between the languages (Dopke, 1992, p. 55), it should not be considered an absolute requirement throughout bilingual child-raising. Rather than seeing themselves as models of a single language, parents are probably more effective if they regard themselves as models of bilingualism and biculturalism, constantly adopting to their children's changing linguistic and social needs. Flexibility, ingenuity and sensitivity are far more important in raising well-adjusted bilingual children than absolute linguistic consistency could ever be.

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